

Soil Testing Requirements

Under the National Organic Program, Organic Production System Plans must include monitoring practices that measure soil quality. Soil testing provides one method for measuring the quality of the soil. Soil testing is required in order to meet the organic requirements, unless an alternative method can demonstrate that soil quality is being monitored.

Soil tests are required at least once every three years. Soil test results should be submitted with your application. If they are not available, please send them in as soon as possible as they are required for organic certification.

Soil tests must include an analysis of the following components:

1. Percent organic matter.
2. Cation exchange capacity. The Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) test is not usually included in the standard soil test. The extra charge for a separate CEC test generally ranges from \$17- \$35. A calculated CEC test, which is based upon the other elements of your soil test, may be substituted for an actual CEC test. Some testing labs do not conduct either the CEC or calculated CEC tests, so check with the lab before sending your soil samples.
3. pH.
4. Nitrogen. The nitrogen test should be for total available nitrogen, not just nitrate nitrogen.
5. Phosphorus. The standard test conducted for phosphorus is fine.
6. Potassium. The standard test conducted for potassium is fine.
7. Copper. The copper test should be for total copper, not just available copper.

The cost of a standard soil test will vary from \$30-\$90 depending on the laboratory used.

To locate a soil lab that will test your samples:

Contact your County Extension office to locate a soil lab that will test your samples. For a list of soil testing labs, visit the Hot Topics section of our website at <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/FoodProducers.htm>, or call (360) 902-1805 and we will mail you a copy.

For more information on how to take and interpret your soil samples, the two websites listed below have many good titles and references:

http://caheinfo.wsu.edu/pub_home_page/pub.html
<http://eesc.orst.edu/agcomwebfile/edmat/EdmatIndexAg.html>